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FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (A/45/241/Add.1). During its consideration of the item, representatives of the Secretary-General provided additional information to the Advisory Committee.

2. MINURSO was established by Security Council resolution 690 (1991) of 29 April 1991, which approved the report of the Secretary-General (S/22464 and Corr.1) of 19 April 1991, transmitted in accordance with resolution 658 (1990) of 27 June 1990, and the Secretary-General's proposals contained in his report. With regard to the method of financing of MINURSO, the Secretary-General recalls in paragraph 5 of his report (A/45/241/Add.1) his recommendation that "its full cost should be considered as expenses of the Organization to be borne by Member States in accordance with Article 17, paragraph 2, of the Charter". The Secretary-General further recalls his intention "to recommend to the General Assembly that the assessments to be levied on Member States be credited to a special account that would be established for this purpose".

3. The Advisory Committee notes the statement of the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council of 24 April 1991 (S/22532) that "the budget of MINURSO should be adopted without change and that it should be reviewed after six months, at which time any necessary adjustments can be made". Representatives of the Secretary-General explained to the Committee that the statement referred not to the cost estimates, but to the period for which they were meant to apply. The Committee understands that even though it appeared

in a report to the Security Council, this statement which is also referred to in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report on the financing of MINURSO, was not approved by the Council. Representatives of the Secretary-General confirmed to the Advisory Committee his awareness that, in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter, it is the General Assembly which considers and approves the budget of the Organization. In order to avoid confusion in the budgetary process, the Advisory Committee trusts that statements of this nature will be avoided in future.

4. As indicated in section II of the report (ibid.), the Advisory Committee concurred in the Secretary-General's request to enter into commitments not exceeding a total of $316,900 for the establishment of the preparatory office of the Special Representative for Western Sahara from its inception on 1 November 1990 through 1 July 1991 on the understanding that the MINURSO should include the costs of the preparatory office.

5. The Advisory Committee further concurred, on 6 May 1991, in the Secretary-General's request to enter into additional commitments not exceeding $572,800 net under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/203 on unforeseen and extraordinary expenditure for the biennium 1990-1991 pending the Committee's consideration of the detailed MINURSO budget. This authorization was given to enable the Secretary-General to begin implementing the plan for MINURSO approved by Security Council resolution 690 (1991), pending the adoption of a budget for MINURSO by the General Assembly at its forthcoming resumed forty-fifth session. This amount covers the establishment and operation of the Identification Commission for up to eight weeks, consisting of staff salaries ($338,000), common staff costs ($228,300) and other operating costs ($5,700).

6. According to section III of the report, the Secretary-General estimates that the MINURSO operation, as set out in the timetable in paragraph 52 of S/22464 and approved by Security Council resolution 690 (1991), beginning 29 April 1991, would amount to $180,617,000 gross ($176,868,000 net) at full cost. The Committee notes that this estimate is on the basis of a "worst case-scenario", which does not take into account the provision of facilities and voluntary contributions that may be received. A breakdown of this cost estimate is provided in annex I to the Secretary-General's report and supplementary information thereon in annex II. The proposed civilian staffing table of MINURSO is contained in annex III and its deployment and cost estimate are provided in annexes IV and V.

7. The total cost estimate includes prior commitments not exceeding $316,900 for the establishment of the preparatory office of the Special Representative for Western Sahara and $572,800 net to cover the establishment and operation of the Identification Commission for up to eight weeks under the terms of General Assembly resolution 44/203 in order to meet interim pre-implementation expenses (see paras. 4 and 5 above). It does not include the estimates for the repatriation of estimated 62,000 Western Saharans by the UNHCR as part of MINURSO's operation, which, according to the Secretary-General, "should be regarded as a humanitarian activity and ... therefore be funded through voluntary contributions" (ibid., para. 18).

8. In this connection, the Committee notes the Secretary-General's statement (ibid., para. 19 and S/22464, para. 60) that "MINURSO should not be deployed in the mission area on D-day unless it has been unequivocally established, by that date, that the necessary voluntary contributions totalling $34.5 million would be available in full and in time to permit implementation of the repatriation programme". In view of the urgency of the matter, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General launch, without delay, a special appeal to all Governments and make other efforts, including convening a pledging conference, to enable the repatriation of Western Saharans by UNHCR, as scheduled. The Secretary-General should report on the funding to the General Assembly as early as possible and before the transitional period begins. The representatives of the Secretary-General stated that some Member States have indicated the possibility to provide voluntary contributions in kind such as air transportation, which would substantially reduce the UNHCR budgetary requirements. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recommends that cost estimates relating to the repatriation of Western Saharans by UNHCR as part of the MINURSO operation be submitted to the Committee at an appropriate time.

9. In paragraphs 8 to 14 of his report (A/45/241/Add.1), the Secretary-General summarizes the operational plan for MINURSO, including the timetable, and states the general assumptions on which the cost estimates are based. The Advisory Committee further notes from paragraph 10 of the report (ibid.) that the transitional period (D-Day) begins about 16 weeks after the General Assembly approves the MINURSO budget and the referendum will be held about 20 weeks later.

10. The Advisory Committee undertook a careful and detailed examination of the cost estimates and supplementary information thereon as set out in annexes to the report (ibid.). The Committee was informed that in view of the short notice for preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the MINURSO budget since the adoption of Security Council resolution 690 (1991) on 29 April 1991 and the Secretariat's preparation and emplacement of other peace-keeping operations at the same time as well as some unknown factors with regard to MINURSO, there are a number of uncertainties with regard to the estimates, which are based on full costs.

11. The Advisory Committee notes from the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council (S/22464, para. 50) that if adequate facilities were provided to MINURSO the level of expenditures would be reduced and result in further savings. In this connection, the Committee recalls the model status-of-forces agreement for peace-keeping operations, contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/594). Accordingly, the Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will pursue every effort to obtain premises for the operation and the accommodation of the staff without cost to MINURSO, which should result in substantial savings.

12. The Committee was also informed of several other possibilities, including that air support could be provided as a voluntary contribution and that some equipment could be made available from other peace-keeping operations or from

the existing supply depot at a charge to MINURSO below market cost. The Committee is of the view that the above elements and other possible savings may considerably reduce the actual total budgetary requirements of MINURSO.

13. The Advisory Committee notes that mission subsistence allowance (MSA) is provided for 550 military observers ($8.8 million), 245 dispersed military personnel ($4.4 million), 300 civilian police officers ($2.9 million), 280 government-provided personnel ($0.9 million) and up to 561 International staff ($8.0 million) at full MSA rate of $85 per day for 70 per cent of the above personnel and at the "accommodation provided" rate of $65 per day for the remaining 30 per cent. The Committee is of the view that the above rates are high compared to local conditions. The Committee further notes that in view of the planned provision of civilian accommodation for more than 1,000 persons ($9.0 million), military living accommodation for 445 persons ($3.1 million), transit staff accommodation for 60 short-term staff, and staff accommodation for 35 large and 10 small polling stations ($2.1 million), less than 70 per cent of the eligible personnel would be entitled to the full MSA rate of $85.

14. The Committee, upon receipt of additional information from representatives of the Secretary-General, believes that in comparison with other operations, the MINURSO estimates for death and disability awards, medical evacuation travel, and payments to troop contributing countries for contingent-owned equipment may afford room for substantial savings.

15. With regard to civilian personnel costs, the Committee is of the view that the proposed MINURSO staffing table with two Under-Secretary-Generals and three Assistant Secretary-Generals for a relatively small operation with short duration is top-heavy. In this connection, the Committee recalls that the head of the election division for UNTAG was appointed at the D-2 level. The Committee therefore recommends that not more than one USG (the Special Representative for Western Sahara) and one ASG (the Force Commander) be appointed for MINURSO. The Committee was also informed that some of the up to 561 International staff, who may not be available in the Secretariat, may be substituted by government-provided personnel and the maximum number of civilian staff may not be required as envisaged. This may well result in savings under salaries and common staff costs.

16. As regards the provision for premises and accommodation ($25.1 million), the Committee notes that it would be reduced in case of provision of facilities and voluntary contributions in kind. The Committee is of the view that the provision of $2.5 million for alteration under maintenance of premises is high and that every effort should be made to achieve savings.

17. With regard to the proposed acquisition of a total of 824 vehicles for MINURSO ($17.9 million), including 98 sedans and 546 station wagons, and taking into account the number of staff and the short period of the operation, the Committee believes that less vehicles may be required and savings could be made in hiring rather than purchasing vehicles during the short peak-period. The Committee is of the view that the estimated costs for petrol, oil and

lubricants ($2.8 million) may also be affected by voluntary contributions in this regard. The Committee believes that the estimate of $23.1 million for the leasing of aircraft may be overstated since it is based on a very high number of flying hours/per month and a high estimated cost per flying hour of the various aircraft for the entire period of the operation.

18. With regard to communications equipment ($9.5 million), the Committee had difficulty to ascertain the actual need due to insufficient information on the implementation of the operational plan. In this connection, the Committee recalls its observation in its recent report on the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) concerning the need to ensure the acquisition of equipment that is compatible with the needs of the mission (A/45/1005, para. 18). The Committee recommends that any equipment available from other operations or from the existing supply depot should be utilized.

19. In view of the Committee's observations in paragraphs 8 to 18 above, taking into account the number of uncertainties with regard to the operation plan and the cost estimates for MINURSO and the possibilities of provision of facilities, voluntary contributions by Governments and other savings, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:

Approve, in principle, the proposed cost estimates of the Secretary-General on MINURSO, as contained in his report (A/45/241/Add.1), and appropriate and assess a total of $143 million gross ($140 million net) for the initial six-month period to be financed in accordance with the special scale for peace-keeping operations;

Accept the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in paragraph 15 of its report concerning the high-level posts for MINURSO;

Request the Secretary-General to submit a detailed performance report for the first six months of the operation, taking into account the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report;

Consider appropriations and assessments required to finance MINURSO for the remaining three-month period at its forty-sixth session in the light of the performance report referred to above;

Approve the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in paragraph 8 of its report and request the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at the appropriate time on the results of his special appeal for funding the repatriation programme by UNHCR estimated at $34.5 million and submit to the Advisory Committee the UNHCR cost estimates relating to the repatriation of Western Saharans.